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# IS IMMIGRATION A MENACE?

ADDRESS DELIVERED BY

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AT THE

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AND CORRECTIONS

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## IS IMMIGRATION A MENACE?

If wild assertion were argument and its reiteration proof, the case against immigration would be definitely closed. On no subject before the American people has there been more loose talk and less information, more general statement and less specific fact. Until quite lately we had to deal only with the generalizations of the professional restrictionists. More recently the unwarranted conclusions of the Immigration Commission have also been brought into play. These conclusions are called unwarranted because they utterly fail to tally with the evidence which has been presented in the forty odd volumes published and to be published, as the result of the Commission's investigations. That they do so fail is shown not alone in the summary of the volumes which has been published by the Commission but in the book that has been issued by one of its members, Prof. Jeremiah W. Jenks, in conjunction with Mr. W. Jett Lauck, expert in charge of the industrial investigations of that Commission. The only accurate generalization made by the restrictionists on the subject of immigration is that the nationality of the immigrants has changed; that whereas in former years the bulk of the immigration came from northern and western Europe, it has latterly been coming from southern and eastern Europe. This is obviously true, but it is not true as is so often asserted, that while the so-called older immigration was desirable the newer is undesirable. By every statistical test that can be applied, the statement utterly fails of corroboration; nor should it be forgotten that at the time that the older immigration, the so-called desirable peoples, was coming, the immigration restrictionists of those days considered them as undesirable as the newcomers of to-day are considered by the same class of critics. Nearly a century ago the same arguments were used regarding the bad habits of the immigrants, their tendency to congest the cities,



to reduce wages and to depreciate the American standard of living. The report of the Industrial Commission quotes from Nile's Register of 1817:

"The immigrants should press into the interior. In the present state of the times, we seem too thick on the maritime frontier already."

The same document quotes from the Second Annual Report of the Managers of the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism in New York City, 1819:

"As to the emigrants from foreign countries, the managers are compelled to speak of them in the language of astonishment and apprehension. Through this inlet pauperism threatens us with the most overwhelming consequences. An almost innumerable population beyond the ocean is out of employment and this has the effect of increasing the usual want of employ. This country is the resort of vast numbers of those needy and wretched beings. Many of these foreigners have found employment; some may have passed into the interior; but thousands still remain among us. They are frequently found destitute in our streets; they seek employment at our doors; they are found in our almshouses and in our hospitals; they are found at the bar of criminal tribunals, in our Bridewell, our penitentiary, and our state prison, and we lament to say that they are too often led by want, by vice, and by habit to form a phalanx of plunder and depredations, rendering our city more liable to increase of crime and our houses of correction more crowded with convicts and felons."

The same report urged the importance of transporting the foreigner into the interior so that "instead of bringing up his children in idleness, temptation and crime, he would see them amalgamated with the general mass of our population, deriving benefits from our school systems, our moral institutions, and our habits of industry." In 1835 it would seem that the doleful predictions made in 1819, had not materialized, and the restrictionists then regarded the earlier immigrants as desirable but the then-incoming foreigners as a menace. In a paper entitled "Imminent Dangers to the Institutions of the United States of America Through Foreign Immigration, etc.," published in 1835, the au-

thor speaks of the immigration of previous years as compared with that of the day, and says :

“Then we were few, feeble and scattered. Now, we are numerous, strong and concentrated. Then our accessions of immigration were real accessions of strength from the ranks of the learned and the good, from enlightened mechanic and artisan and intelligent husbandman. Now, immigration is the accession of weakness, from the ignorant and vicious, or the priest-ridden slaves of Ireland and Germany, or the outcast tenants of the poorhouses and prisons of Europe.”

In 1845 the delegates of the Native American National Convention, meeting at Philadelphia on July 4th of that year, published an address in which occurs the following :

“It is an incontrovertible truth that the civil institutions of the United States of America have been seriously affected and that they now stand in imminent peril from the rapid and enormous increase in the body of residents of foreign birth, imbued with foreign feelings and of an ignorant and immoral character.

“The almshouses of Europe are emptied upon our coast, and this by our own invitation—not casually, or to a trivial extent—but systematically and upon a constantly increasing scale.”

All this is about that class of immigrants which we now call desirable, the fact being that, as at one time in our history, only the dead Indian was regarded as a good Indian, so at all times, to the restrictionists, only the immigrant who did not come, was regarded as a good immigrant.

Much has been said lately about the illiteracy test. I do not favor such a test for immigrants, but I do think it should be required of professors of political economy. While I do not believe that they should be called upon to read a slip containing not less than twenty nor more than twenty-five words of the Constitution of the United States, I do believe they should be able to read and understand, if not in the original, at least in an English translation, the Ninth Commandment, and should also be able to read and understand tables of statistics, particularly those from which they draw their conclusions. This would not seem an unreasonable



requirement, yet Prof. Jenks fails to meet it. On page 63 of his book he says:

“Among those entering who have been debarred for prostitution or arrested and deported for the same cause, by far the largest number in proportion to the total admitted, are the French; next to them are apparently the Hebrews.”

Here are the facts as to deported and debarred for prostitution and procuring, for 10,000 female immigrants. As to those debarred, the figures are taken from the report of the commissioner for 1910, and as to those deported, from the same reports, for the years 1908, 1909 and 1910, covering the three years during which deportation is possible:

Mexican .....	338
French .....	96.4
English .....	33.8
Scotch .....	32.6
Irish .....	25.5
German .....	20.4
Hebrew .....	8.2

So that instead of the Hebrews being next to the largest in proportion to the total admitted, they are below all of the so-called desirable races.

Applying every statistical test, it would seem as though the so-called desirables were the undesirables and vice versa. For example, Prof. Jenks says, on page 45 of his book:

“It is rather a striking fact that so far as one can judge from these records kept, the races of the recent immigration, those from southern and eastern Europe, are not so subject to the diseases which seem to be allied with moral weaknesses, as some of those of the older immigration races.”

And he gives the following statistics of cases in hospitals:

	Accidents	Alcoholism
Italians .....	17.3	2.3
Hebrew .....	17.6	.6
Irish .....	8.6	39.6
English .....	8.9	27.5
German .....	8.5	18.4

Testing the relative desirability of the immigrants by the records of insanity, we find the following table:

	Foreign-born white insane enumerated in hospitals, Dec. 31, 1903	Foreign-born population, 1910
Ireland .....	29.	15.6
Germany .....	28.9	25.8
England and Wales.....	7.	9.
Canada .....	6.5	11.4
Scandinavia .....	11.5	10.3
Scotland .....	1.7	2.3
Italy .....	2.3	4.7
France .....	1.2	1.
Hungary and Bohemia .....	2.2	2.9
Russia and Poland .....	4.4	7.8
Other countries .....	7.3	9.2

Testing it by their affiliation with labor unions, we find that the so-called desirable French-Canadian, English, Irish, Swedish, Bohemian, Moravian and German are affiliated to the extent of 11.4%, while the so-called undesirable Italian, Lithuanian, Hebrew, Ruthenian, Slovak, Magyar and Polish are affiliated to the extent of 16.6%, being nearly one half more.

During the last twenty years covering the period of high immigration of the so-called undesirable races, this country has undergone an economic development so tremendous in its character and importance, that the mind staggers in the attempt to grasp the figures. During that time, the population of the country has increased about one half. The production of coal, which is the measure of economic activity, is almost three times what it then was. In other words, the economic growth of the country has been six times as great as its numerical growth. The output of our factories has increased in ten years from eleven thousand million dollars to over twenty thousand million dollars and the number of wage-earners engaged in producing that output from 4,700,000 to 6,600,000. During precisely the period when the so-called undesirable immigration was greatest, wages advanced



most rapidly. The average wages in all industries in 1880 were \$344. According to the census of 1910, taken the year previous when the effects of the panic of 1907-8 were still felt, average wages had advanced to \$518, being an increase of exactly 50%. That the immigrant is a factor in lowering wages is an argument that cannot be sustained by any ascertainable figures. The clothing industry, having a production of over \$600,000,000 in 1905 (detailed figures from the last census are not yet available), produced almost entirely by immigrant labor of the so-called undesirable class, Hebrew and Italian, paid in wages to men \$601 per capita, as compared with an average earned in that year by men in all industries of \$534 per capita, and to women \$317 per capita, as against \$298 per capita earned by women in all industries. Testing it in yet another way, we find that whereas wages in all industries increased 22% from 1899 to 1909, in the clothing industry they increased 27½% during the same period. Testing it yet again in still another way, we find that in those sections of the country which have the largest immigrant population, wages are highest, and in those which have few immigrants, wages are lowest. In Illinois (Chicago is the largest foreign city in the United States), average wages in 1909 were \$588; in New York, \$555; in North Carolina, \$275; in South Carolina, \$282; and in the whole United States, \$518. That is to say, in Illinois wages are 14% above the average for the whole country; in New York they are 5% above the average; in South Atlantic states they are 30% below the average; in the south central states they are 20% below the average.

It is quite true that the so-called undesirable immigrants arrive here with a smaller amount of ready cash and with a larger degree of illiteracy than the races of the older immigration. The lack of cash they remedy in themselves and the lack of literacy in their children. It is interesting to observe that the children of foreign-born parents (whites) are in every section of the country illiterate to a less degree than the children of native-born white parents. The average illiteracy of native whites of native parents throughout the country is 5.7%, and of native whites of foreign parents throughout the country is but 1.6%, and dividing up the country



into its various geographical sections, we find from the census reports upon this subject, the following:

	Native whites of native parents	Native whites of foreign parents
North Atlantic .....	1.7	1.5
South Atlantic .....	12.0	2.1
North Central .....	2.8	1.3
South Central .....	11.6	6.8
Western Division .....	3.4	1.3

Were the negro population included in this statement, the showing would be yet far more advantageous to the children of immigrants.

The allegation that immigrants contribute more than their quota to our prisons, is negated by an examination of the facts. The Census Bureau's report on Prisons and Juvenile Delinquents in Institutions, published in 1904, eliminates from its calculation, quite properly, all children under ten years of age, since these are rarely criminals, and for purposes of comparison, they must be omitted, as the immigrants range in age chiefly from 15 to 40 years. The report says, "The figures give little support to the belief that the foreign born contribute to the prison class greatly in excess of their representation in the general population," and a close analysis shows, as a matter of fact, that they contribute less than their proportion. The total foreign-born population between 15 and 19 years of age is 5.4% of the whole foreign-born population, whereas of the foreign-born persons committed to prison during 1904, 4.6% were within this age limit, showing that there were fewer foreign-born persons from 15 to 19 years of age committed to prison than their percentage in the population. The Industrial Commission report calls attention to the fact that criminality is three to five times greater in males than in females, and that persons under twenty seldom commit crime. Taking, therefore, male persons 20 years of age and upward, we find by the 1900 census that there are 26% foreign-born whites and 74% native-born whites. Taking the report on prisoners, page 40, we observe that of the major offenders committed during 1904, 21.7% were foreign born

and 78.3% native, the foreign born having less and the native more than their proportion of prisoners. In New York State, which has the largest foreign population, we find 61.7% native born and 38.3% foreign born, and of the white persons enumerated in New York State in June, 1904, we find that 68% were native born and 32% foreign born, the foreign born contributing  $\frac{6}{38}$ , or about 16%, less than their ratio in the community. In view of the fact that 38% of the male adult population in New York is foreign born, the frequently quoted statement that foreigners make up 25% of the prisoners in Sing Sing, Auburn and Clinton, is favorable to them rather than otherwise. The Government report from which these figures have been gathered says, "It is evident that the huge recent additions of foreigners to the population are not reflected in the prison returns in the degree the prison statistics of 1890 might have led one to expect." In 1890 the prisoners were divided, 28.3% foreign born and 71.7% native born. In 1904 there were 23.7% foreign born and 76.3% native born, showing a decline of foreign-born prisoners between 1890 and 1904, precisely the years that are coincident with the large immigration of the so-called undesirable classes. From the same report on prisoners, the following figures are taken:

*Number of Prisoners per 100,000 Population in 1890 and 1904*

	1890	1904
New York .....	191	126
Pennsylvania .....	123	92
Illinois .....	102	60
Massachusetts .....	233	187
New Jersey .....	169	131

These five states, which have the largest proportion of immigrants, all show substantial decreases in the ratio of prisoners between 1890 and 1904, whereas substantial increases are shown in New Hampshire, Vermont, West Virginia, Florida, Wyoming, Kansas and Washington, where the immigrant population is small. It were desirable, of course, that the immigrants coming to this country should be all educated, all moral and all immune from disease. In that event none of them would become public charges



and the cost of maintenance for those that fall, either physically or morally, would be spared us. This, however, cannot reasonably be expected. The people who come to us are average human beings with the average virtues and the average vices. What it may cost us to maintain in public institutions those who must be so maintained, is but an infinitesimal fraction of what they bring us in material wealth. Mr. Prescott F. Hall, Secretary of the Immigration Restriction League, says in his book on immigration:

“In estimating the money value of the immigrant, attention may first be called to the fact that the bulk of our immigration is of the age of greatest productiveness; that is to say, this country has the benefit of an artificial selection of adults of working age. For example, in 1903, less than 12% of all immigrants were under 14 years of age, and less than 5% were over 45 years of age, leaving more than 83% between the ages of 14 and 45. In other words, the expense of bringing up the bulk of our immigrants through childhood has been borne by the countries of their birth or residence, and this amount of capital therefore comes to us without expenditure. Prof. Mayo-Smith refers to the frequently quoted estimate of Frederick Kapp that the cost of bringing up a child to the age of 15, is \$562.50 in Germany and \$1,000 to \$1,200 in the United States. Taking the value of the immigrant at \$1,000, the immigration over 14 years of age in 1903 would have added \$754,615,000 to the wealth of the United States if it had all remained in the country. \* \* \* \* A thoroughly conservative estimate is probably that of Mr. John B. Webber, formerly Commissioner of Immigration at the port of New York. He assumes that there were 10,000,000 foreign born at the date of the Eleventh Census, and that 2,000,000 of these were working at an average wage of \$1 per day; and he points out that these persons added \$600,000,000 per year to the earnings of this country.”

In view of the fact that, according to these figures, the immigrant adds annually \$600,000,000 to the earnings of this country, we can well afford to pay the cost of those who fall by the way, nor may we be blind to the fact that a large part of this cost is due to the immigrant being engaged in doing the heavy and dangerous work of the community, and when he becomes disabled in doing our work, it is but fair that we should pay the bill.

It is claimed that the particular immigrant whom we should all unite as regarding least desirable is the bird of passage, he

who comes here when times are good and goes back to his own country in bad times, deserting the country in times of adversity as a rat deserts a sinking ship, and carrying his earnings with him. Of all the fallacies which have been advanced upon the subject, none is greater than this. The so-called bird of passage, instead of being a menace to our industrial conditions, is their greatest help. He gives flexibility; comes when there is a demand for his work and departs when the demand is over. I stood some time ago at a window and watched an endless chain ladder going up and down where a building was being erected. Immigrant workmen were feeding in loaded hods at the bottom and others were taking them out at the top. In former days men would take these hods upon their shoulders and, climbing up the ladder, would deposit their contents at the top. By the ingenious device of the endless chain, the labor of many men was dispensed with, and only those are needed now who load the machine at the bottom and unload it at the top. If some clever inventor were to devise a plan whereby this loading and unloading could be done mechanically, he would be doing a service. Pending such invention, the work is performed by this immigrant labor, and when the job is done, if there be no other job upon which the endless chain and the men are needed, the machine is put out of commission by its owner and the workmen put themselves out of commission by returning to their native country. How is anybody injured by this? It has been argued that these men would be doing a patriotic service if they stayed in the country and spent here the money which they made here. We must not lose sight of the fact, however, that the bird of passage goes home because he has no work and the amount of money expended by a man out of work is not very useful to the community at large, and when in the course of two, six or ten weeks his savings are exhausted, he must either live by his wits or at the expense of the community as a public charge. Nor is it true that the unskilled immigrant is a competitor who displaces the skilled and native workman. Just as the immigrants who were supplying the endless chain with material for the skilled masons at the top of the building, were feeding those masons with work, so in all industries the work of the



immigrant is not competitive but complementary, and as the incoming of the Irish and the Germans in former days forced the native into higher walks of industry, so the later immigration is forcing the earlier into higher walks. The heavy work that is being done by the present immigration would remain undone if it were left to native Americans. The Anglo-Saxon and American have shown keen zest with a pick when digging for gold, but digging for sewers and subways at day laborer's wage, has never seemed an attractive occupation to them.

It has been alleged that immigration degrades our citizenship. At the National Conference in Buffalo, I took the liberty of reading the following item from a report in the *New York Times* of March 8, 1906, of the proceedings of the Conference of the National Civic Federation upon the subject of primary reform:

“Mark E. Sullivan, of New York, told of a recent visit to Greene County, in Western Pennsylvania, and the method of primary elections there. ‘It was a remarkable spectacle,’ he said. ‘Every man in the village where I was got money for his vote, the prices ranging from \$10 to \$45. There was no concealment and the clergymen of the community dared not attack the system because public sentiment would not tolerate it. The people there counted this money as a regular portion of their annual revenue.’”

A reference to the census report shows that Greene County, Pa., contains of males, twenty-one years of age and over, native white, 7,462; foreign white, 91; negroes, 89; yet in the village visited by Mr. Sullivan, in a county less than 1½% of which was of foreign birth, there exists this terrible political corruption.

About a month ago, President Taft spoke to the people of Adams County in this state, and it subsequently developed that 2,000 of the residents of that county had been disfranchised because of political corruption. The census shows Adams County, Ohio, to have of males twenty-one years and over, native white, 6,986; foreign white, 137; negro, 87. It would hardly seem as though the immigrant were responsible for this political degradation. My native state, Pennsylvania, bears a not too savory political reputation, but I have never heard it asserted that the unassimilated Pennsylvania Dutch who have lived in that state for more than

a century without learning to speak English, have been responsible for any part of the political conditions there existing. On the other hand, it is a well known fact that every movement for political reform which has been successful in New York State, and I believe elsewhere, has had its warmest support among the immigrant voters.

The congestion of population in cities is one of the results generally attributed to immigration. We have here a subject upon which it is very easy to become hysterical. We see the growth of cities, we see the incoming immigrant, and we connect the two. A closer study of the question will show us that there is no real connection between them. The tendency to urban in preference to rural pursuits is one of the marked developments of modern times and is the inevitable consequence of the establishment of great industries in cities. A typical illustration is to be found in the city of Schenectady, where, in the last decade, the population has increased about 150%. This has been due chiefly to the establishment there of the works of the General Electric Company, with its army of employees. The bringing to a small city of such a vast establishment, is instantly reflected in its population. Such a plant, great as it is, would not be immediately noticeable in the city of New York, but the process of attracting population to the site of the plant is precisely the same, whether we observe its operations or not. The menacing fact which we must realize is that the trend of population is away from the land and toward the city. The imperious demands of industry are insistent and will be obeyed. In view of this, we must not be blind to the fact that every immigrant taking a place in an urban industry holds an American farmer on his farm and were the response to the demand for industrial help not coming from new arrivals, it would inevitably come from the American farm. Great as is the tendency to-day to desert the farm for the city, that tendency would be stimulated by a curtailment of immigration and an absence of the foreign supply. Deplore as we may the congestion in cities, we must realize that it is related only remotely, if at all, to the matter of immigration and that any attempt to lessen it by lessening immigration, would be certain to increase the domestic migra-



tion from farm to factory. Furthermore, so far as the evils of congestion are concerned, we must be mindful of the fact that while the condition is practically permanent, those living under that condition are a changing population who are only temporarily subject to the evils that we decry. This is clearly evident by the fact that in the foreign quarters of New York, Philadelphia and other large cities, the proportion of voters is very small as compared to the entire population of the district, due to the fact that the residents have not been sufficiently long in the district to have acquired citizenship. Before the time that they are long enough in residence to receive their voting papers, they move away into other and less congested quarters, their places being taken by newer comers who repeat the same process. Representatives in Congress from such districts in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago have publicly stated that this process describes precisely what is continually going on in their districts.

We have, until now, considered only the material aspects of immigration. There is, however, an aspect of the question, higher and more important than has been touched upon. We have seen from the material side that the immigrant has made for our prosperity. There is still the moral side to consider. Every normal man should have the inalienable right to move freely about the face of the globe. This is a fundamental doctrine which we should never forget and to which, whether to our advantage or not, we should at all times give assent. Our most glorious heritage as Americans is the knowledge that in this free land there has always been a welcome for every man struggling for liberty or striving for opportunity. Our true greatness has been not in our industrial prosperity nor in our financial supremacy. It has been in the fact that those who were oppressed, whether politically, economically or for conscience' sake, could always come here and under our free skies, work out their destinies. And even to those who could not come, or could not hope to come, the knowledge that on this side of the Atlantic there is a great country in which the principles of freedom are paramount, has been an inspiration and a heartening encouragement. In all American history there is no more thrilling episode than an incident related by George Kennan.

On the fourth of July, 1876, the Centennial of American Independence, every cell in a Siberian prison was decorated with scraps of red, white and blue. For months these exiles and prisoners had saved every scrap of suitable color, and on the morning of our Independence Day, their cells had blossomed forth with this expression of admiration and love for American freedom. If the principles we profess are not mere lip service, if we value the ideals that the fathers valued, if we treasure the inheritance that they left us and would pass it on unimpaired to future generations, let us set our faces firmly against the narrow doctrine which it is sought to establish here. In all generations, the saviors of mankind have come from among the poor. Let us not have it on our conscience that we have closed the door of opportunity to one of these.

We must be mindful of the truth that the greatest danger of degradation of American standards comes not from without but from within. If we depart from our historic paths, if we elevate material things and debase freedom, if we impair our ideals of liberty in the hope of conserving prosperity, we conserve nothing and lose all. The love of liberty in American hearts has been our greatest treasure, and if we injure this we inflict a mortal injury. Above all other considerations, let us keep intact our national ideals. In the last analysis, ideals are the ultimate realities, the most valuable asset a country can have. They must be lovingly cared for and nurtured else they wither and die. They cannot be lightly set aside at the behest of real or fancied self-interest, for once set aside they cannot be restored. The degradation of one ideal leads the way to the degradation of another and the supremacy of materialism in one walk of life speedily makes for its supremacy in others. We are the heirs of a glorious heritage, of a past of genuine nobility and great promise for all mankind. Let us see to it that this heritage is unimpaired when it passes to our descendants.